AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for tracking blood transfusions, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) obtaining [[patient]] identifying information for a patient[[, storing said patient identifying information in a database,]] and providing [[the]] said patient with a wristband [[having]] comprising said patient identifying information;

(b) collecting a blood sample from said patient and testing said blood sample to determine the type of blood required by the patient;

[[(b)]] (c) allocating from a supply of blood units a blood transfusion unit for the patient, wherein said blood transfusion unit contains the type of blood required by said patient and wherein said blood transfusion unit is marked with an identifying code;

[[(c)]] (d) labelling [[the]] said allocated blood transfusion unit with a compatibility [[information including]] label, wherein said compatibility label comprises said patient identifying information and said identifying code[[, and storing said compatibility information in the database]];

[[(d)]] (e) generating a blood unit request [[form]] slip for the patient, the blood unit request slip including said patient identifying information

[[(e)]] (f) retrieving the blood transfusion unit and verifying [[its]] the blood transfusion unit's identity by comparing the patient identifying information on the blood unit request [[form]] slip to the patient identifying information [[in]] on the compatibility label [[information]] on the patient allocated blood transfusion unit; [[and]]

[[(f)]] (g) comparing the patient identifying information from the patient's wristband to the patient identifying information [[in]] on the compatibility [[information]] label on said patient allocated blood transfusion unit; and

(h) comparing the identifying code marked on the patient allocated blood unit with the identifying code on the compatibility label on said patient allocated blood transfusion unit.

2. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1 including the step of providing an alarm in response to a mismatch between the patient identifying information on the blood transfusion unit and the patient identifying information on the blood request [[form]] slip when compared.

3. (original) The method according to claim 1 including the step of providing an alarm in response to a mismatch between the patient identifying information from the wristband and the patient identifying information in the compatibility information on the blood transfusion unit when compared.

4. (canceled) The method according to claim 1 in which the compatibility information further includes blood unit identifying information.

5. (canceled) The method according to claim 4 wherein the blood transfusion unit is labelled with a label having blood unit identifying information.

6. (currently amended) The method according to claim [[5]] 1 including comparing the blood unit identifying information [[on the blood unit identifying information]] on the blood transfusion unit with the blood unit identifying information in the compatibility information.

7. (original) The method according to claim 6 including providing an alarm in response to a mismatch between the blood unit identifying information on the blood transfusion unit and the blood unit identifying information in the compatibility information.

8. (original) The method according to claim 7 including transmitting the patient identification information read from the wristband, the blood unit identification information read

from the blood transfusion unit and the patient identification information and blood unit identification read from the compatibility label to a computer database.

9. (currently amended) A method for collecting and storing in a computer database information about blood transfusions, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing a patient with a wristband having patient identification information encoded thereon and obtaining a blood sample from the patient;

(b) reading patient identification information from the wristband and printing a blood sample identification label, the blood sample identification label including the patient identification information, and applying the blood sample identification label to the blood sample;

(c) transmitting the patient information to a computer database each time a blood sample identification label is printed;

(d) selecting a blood unit suitable for transfusion into the patient from a supply of blood units and marking the blood unit with a unique blood unit identification code;

(e) printing and applying a compatibility label to the blood unit, the compatibility label including the patient identification information and the blood unit identification code;

(f) reading the patient identification information and the blood unit identification code from the compatibility label;

(g) reading the patient identification information from the wristband, and comparing [[it]] the patient identification information from the wristband to the patient identification information on the compatibility label;

(h) comparing the blood unit identification code on the compatibility label with the blood unit identification code on the blood unit;

(i) providing an alarm if the patient identification information from the wristband does not match the patient identification information on the compatibility label or if the blood unit identification code on the compatibility label does not match the blood unit identification code on the blood unit; and

(j) transmitting the patient identification information read from the wristband, the blood unit identification code read from the blood unit and the patient identification information and blood unit identification read from the compatibility label to a computer database.

10. (currently amended) The method according to claim 9 including the step of generating a blood request [[form]] slip for the patient, the blood request [[form]] slip including patient identification information.

11. (currently amended) The method according to claim 10 including the step of comparing the patient identification information on the blood request [[form]] slip to the patient identification information on the compatibility label.

12. (currently amended) The method according to claim 11 including providing an alarm if the patient identification information on the blood request [[form]] slip does not match the patient identification information on the compatibility label.

13. (original) The method according to claim 9 including in step (h) the step of verifying that the selected blood unit has been properly stored.

14. (original) The method according to claim 13 including providing an alarm if the selected blood unit has been improperly stored.

15. (currently amended) Apparatus for tracking the movement of blood products, said apparatus comprising:

a blood product identification tag attached to each unit of said blood products, each of said blood product identification tags encoding a unique blood product identification code;

a caregiver identification tag for each caregiver, each of said caregiver identification tags encoding a unique caregiver identification code;

refrigerated storage means for storing said blood products;

tag reading means associated with said refrigerated storage means for reading blood product identification codes and caregiver identification codes; and

a computer coupled to said tag reading means, said computer including software for recording blood product identification codes for each blood product stored in said refrigerated storage means, and recording the caregiver identification code for each caregiver who accesses the refrigerated storage means.

16. (original) The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the blood product identification tag comprises a radio frequency identification tag.

17. (original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the caregiver identification tag comprises a radio frequency identification tag.

18. (original) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein said storage means includes a lock under the control of said computer.

19. (original) The apparatus of claim 18 wherein said computer includes blood product identification code information for each blood product contained in said storage means.

20. (original) The apparatus of claim 19 wherein said computer opens the lock in response to a request from a caregiver only when said request includes a blood product identification code that matches a blood product identification code for a blood product stored in said storage means.